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PRESS RELEASE

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Department on Aging Recognizes 50th Anniversary of National Senior Nutrition Program

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – This March, the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) is joining the [Administration for Community Living \(ACL\)](#) and local senior nutrition service providers to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the national Senior Nutrition Program.

“Since its inception, the national Senior Nutrition Program has provided healthy, well-balanced meals to older adults in both group and home settings,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “Illinois is proud to recognize the 50th anniversary of this program and the tremendous impact it has on seniors’ health and continued independent living in their communities.”

Since 1972, the Senior Nutrition Program has supported nutrition services for older adults. Funded by the federal Older Americans Act, local senior nutrition programs serve as hubs for adults age 60 and older to access meals and other nutrition services that strengthen social connections and promote health and well-being.

Each year in the U.S., up to half of older adults are at risk of malnutrition, and more than 10 million face hunger. To combat food insecurity among this population, Illinois’ Aging Network provides nutritious and culturally appropriate meals to older adults at more than 393 congregate dining sites statewide, including senior centers, churches, senior housing facilities and community buildings. Home-delivered meals are also available to older adults who are unable to cook or shop for food on their own. With the temporary closure of in-person dining sites at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Aging Network responded to a 50% increase in need for home-delivered meals, providing an average of nearly 1 million home-delivered meals per month since March 2020. Today, many reopened group dining sites are providing packaged grab-and-go-style meals as an alternative option while demand for home-delivered meals remains high.

“Local nutrition programs are making a difference in the lives of older Illinoisans every single day,” **said IDoA Director Paula Basta**. “For decades, they have met our seniors’ most basic needs to keep them in their home and provided a daily safety check and social interaction. I am grateful to our Aging Network for sustaining these vital programs that promote healthy aging, and I am excited to join them in celebrating 50 years of success.”

IDoA serves and advocates for older Illinoisans and their caregivers by administering quality and culturally appropriate programs that promote partnerships and encourage independence, dignity, and quality of life. For information about the Department’s programs and services for older adults and persons with disabilities, visit <https://www2.illinois.gov/aging/programs> or contact the Senior HelpLine toll-free at 1-800-252-8966, Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m.

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